Statement of Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA)

At the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education, and Related Agencies Hearing to Review the Administration's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request for the Department of Health and Human Services

As Prepared for Delivery

"The Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education will come to order.

"Madame Secretary, welcome back to the Subcommittee. I want to start by commending you for the outstanding work you're doing to help enact health care reform. We can see the finish line at last, and your leadership is one of the key reasons why.

"I know it will be tempting for Senators on both sides of the dais to want to debate the pros and cons of health care reform with you today. But I would urge subcommittee members to keep their focus on the subject of our hearing – the President's proposed Fiscal Year 2011 budget for the Department of Health and Human Services.

"On the whole, there's much to like in the HHS budget. As we all know, the President's budget holds the line on non-security-related spending overall in Fiscal Year 2011. But he promised to use a scalpel, not an ax, to achieve that freeze, and HHS is one of the Federal agencies that would get an increase -2.5 percent more than in Fiscal Year 2010.

"I was particularly pleased that the President included a major boost for efforts to root out fraud in Medicare and Medicaid. Reducing health care fraud and abuse has been a priority of mine for many years, and will play a key role in bringing our long-term deficits under control.

"Significant increases were also proposed for the National Institutes of Health, Head Start, and child care, and a new caregivers initiative that will help families take care of their elderly relatives.

"Other provisions in the budget raise cause for concern, however. For example, the President's budget would cut funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The budget also includes a \$1.8 billion cut to discretionary funding for LIHEAP.

"But overall, I think the President's budget is a good start, and I look forward to discussing it in more detail with you during this hearing.

"I turn now to Senator Cochran, the vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, for his opening statement."